


Student Attitudes Towards the Professional Competence of Guidance Counselors at SMA Negeri 17 Medan

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe students' attitudes toward the professional competence of guidance counselors at SMA Negeri 17 Medan. The approach used in this study is quantitative descriptive. The population in this study consisted of 861 students in grades X, XI, and XII, and 262 students were sampled using stratified random sampling. The data collection method used instruments of Strongly Agree (SS), Agree (S), Disagree (TS), and Strongly Disagree (STS) based on the Likert scale. The data analysis used was descriptive percentage analysis. The results of the study on students' attitudes towards the professional competence of guidance counselors show that the average attitude of students towards the professional competence of guidance counselors at SMA Negeri 17 Medan is in the positive category. Students' attitudes towards the professional competence of guidance counselors are divided into five aspects, namely acceptance, response, assessment, organization, and characterization. The aspect of organization, with a percentage of 34.4%, is in the negative category. The acceptance aspect, with a percentage of 63.7%, was in the positive category, the response aspect, with a percentage of 42.4%, was in the positive category, the assessment aspect, with a percentage of 35.9%, was in the positive category, and the characterization aspect, with a percentage of 39.7%, was in the positive category.

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Introduction

The implementation of education in Indonesia has entered an era of professionalization that demands continuous improvement in the quality of educational personnel. In accordance with the Regulation of the Minister of National Education No. 27 of 2008, national educational policies and regulations emphasize the importance of developing and fostering educators as professional practitioners. This initiative aims to prevent the emergence of the phenomenon of Education Without Educational Science while strengthening the concept of Education Based on Educational Science. One of the essential elements supporting the realization of professional education is the provision of guidance and counseling services. From a legal perspective, guidance and counseling teachers, or school counselors, are recognized as professional educators within the national education system, alongside teachers, lecturers, learning facilitators, and tutors, as stipulated in Article 1, Clause 6 of Law No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System. Similar to other professional educators, guidance and counseling teachers are required to meet academic qualification and competency standards as outlined in the Regulation of the Minister of National Education No. 27 of 2008 concerning the Academic Qualification Standards and Counselor Competencies. Within the school setting, guidance and counseling teachers bear primary responsibility for planning, implementing, and evaluating guidance and counseling services (Prayitno, 2019).

According to the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia No. 16 of 2007 concerning Academic Qualification Standards and Teacher Competencies for elementary, junior secondary, and senior secondary education, the minimum academic qualification for teachers is a Diploma IV (D-4) or a Bachelor's degree (S-1). The regulation further stipulates that teachers must possess four core competencies: pedagogical, personal, social, and professional competence. These competencies are not independent of one another but are integrated into teachers' professional duties and performance. Consistent with these provisions, guidance and counseling teachers (BK teachers) or school counselors are also expected to

demonstrate and implement all four competencies in their professional practice. Personal competence reflects counselors' ability to demonstrate integrity, self-confidence, principled behavior, authority, and exemplary conduct for students (Dahlan, 2017). Pedagogical competence relates to counselors' ability to design, implement, and evaluate learning and counseling processes effectively while addressing students' developmental needs. Social competence encompasses the ability to establish positive communication and harmonious relationships with students, fellow educators, and the wider community (Prayitno & Marjohan, 2019). The present study focuses specifically on professional competence, which refers to counselors' mastery of the knowledge, skills, and techniques required to deliver effective guidance and counseling services. Such competence enables counselors to provide high-quality services that help students understand, internalize, and apply the positive values embedded in guidance and counseling interventions (Wibowo, 2019).

Guidance and counseling services cannot be implemented effectively without qualified professionals who possess the competencies necessary to design and deliver such programs. In this regard, school counselors play a pivotal role in ensuring the successful implementation of guidance and counseling services. Counselors function as professionals who assist students through the application of appropriate counseling principles, approaches, and techniques. Professionally, they serve as facilitators, consultants, advisors, and educators who help students recognize their potential, understand the challenges they face, and identify constructive solutions to address those challenges (Billah et al., 2023). Therefore, professional competence can be regarded as a crucial factor determining the effectiveness of guidance and counseling services. This competence influences not only the quality and performance of counselors but also students' participation and engagement in counseling programs at school. Counselors with strong professional competence are more likely to provide meaningful, student-centered services that support the achievement of holistic educational goals.

A study conducted by Sri Hidayati (2012) on the implementation of guidance and counseling programs in Islamic senior high schools throughout Pontianak City revealed that most guidance and counseling teachers had not yet implemented counseling services optimally. The findings indicated that guidance and counseling programs were often developed without being based on a systematic needs assessment and lacked a structured framework encompassing annual, monthly, and weekly planning. Consequently, program implementation frequently failed to align with students' actual needs and characteristics. Many programs appeared to fulfill administrative requirements rather than address real issues encountered in educational settings. These findings suggest that counselors' understanding of the concepts and principles underlying effective guidance and counseling program development remains limited.

Furthermore, interviews conducted during the Guidance and Counseling Teachers' Forum (*Musyawah Guru Bimbingan dan Konseling—MGBK*) at the vocational secondary school level revealed that although some counselors understood the concept of a comprehensive guidance and counseling program theoretically, they encountered difficulties in implementing it in practice. Other counselors were unfamiliar with the concept altogether and continued to rely on guidance and counseling programs based on the 2017 Curriculum framework. In addition, the results of the 2012 Guidance and Counseling Teacher Competency Test indicated that the competency level of school counselors in Pontianak City remained relatively low, with an average achievement score of only 45.41%, ranking the city as the second lowest in West Kalimantan Province (LPMP West Kalimantan Data, 2012). These findings further highlight the need to strengthen counselors' professional competence, particularly in terms of academic knowledge and technical skills related to the delivery of guidance and counseling services.

In contrast, a study conducted by Hazrullah (2018) found that guidance and counseling teachers at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) Rukoh Banda Aceh demonstrated a level of professional understanding consistent with their field of expertise. Most counselors at the school held a Bachelor's degree in Guidance and Counseling, which provided a strong foundation for carrying out their professional responsibilities effectively and responsibly. This academic qualification enabled counselors to perform their roles successfully in delivering guidance and counseling services to students. The study further revealed that counselors at MAN Rukoh Banda Aceh were capable of developing and implementing structured guidance and counseling programs as well as responsive student services tailored to students' needs. These programs facilitated support for students experiencing learning difficulties through collaboration with homeroom teachers, subject teachers, and religious education teachers. Such collaboration strengthened the effectiveness of guidance and

counseling services in helping students overcome academic challenges. Moreover, guidance and counseling services contributed to the creation of a supportive learning environment in which students felt more comfortable and assisted in addressing the problems they encountered. Therefore, the findings underscore the significant influence of competent and professional school counselors on students' psychological well-being and academic success.

A study conducted by Fitriani Hasibuan (2019) at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) 2 Model Medan revealed that guidance and counseling (GC) teachers at the institution had met the minimum academic qualification requirements, holding a Bachelor's degree in Guidance and Counseling and possessing more than five years of professional experience in counseling service delivery. These findings indicate that, from both administrative and academic perspectives, the counselors at MAN 2 Model Medan complied with the standards established within the national education system.

Nevertheless, the study also found that their professional competence had not yet fully met the standards outlined in the Regulation of the Minister of National Education No. 27 of 2008 concerning Academic Qualification Standards and Counselor Competencies. Several dimensions of professional competence remained insufficiently developed, particularly in implementing comprehensive guidance and counseling programs and evaluating both the processes and outcomes of counseling services.

Students' attitudes toward the professional competence of guidance and counseling teachers play a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of school counseling services and the achievement of broader educational objectives. Students' perceptions and evaluations of counselors' abilities, including their understanding of the purpose of counseling services and the meaning of professional practice, may serve as important indicators of service quality. According to the Decree of the Minister of Education and Culture No. 025/O/1995, the primary objective of school guidance and counseling services is to provide assistance to students, both individually and in groups, enabling them to develop independence and maximize their potential in personal, social, academic, and career domains through a range of counseling services and supporting activities grounded in prevailing social and ethical norms. Consequently, positive student attitudes toward school counselors may enhance their engagement in counseling activities, strengthen their self-confidence, and contribute to the success of guidance and counseling programs in promoting students' optimal development.

The quality of guidance and counseling services in educational settings is strongly influenced by the competence and professionalism of school counselors in carrying out their professional responsibilities. Counselors who demonstrate high levels of professionalism play a key role in supporting students' holistic development, including academic, emotional, social, learning, and career-related dimensions. Professional competence not only contributes to the creation of a supportive learning environment and improved student well-being but also facilitates the delivery of effective and targeted career guidance services. In designing counseling programs, school counselors are expected to possess a thorough understanding of the fundamental concepts underlying guidance and counseling practice to ensure that all activities are aligned with established theoretical foundations and professional principles. Comprehensive knowledge of counseling theories, principles, and practices enables counselors to provide services in a professional, systematic, and ethical manner. As emphasized by Prayitno and Erman (2013), school counselors should continuously expand their knowledge and professional expertise in order to enhance the quality and effectiveness of guidance and counseling services within educational settings.

Based on preliminary observations and interviews conducted on February 5, 2025, at SMA Negeri 17 Medan, it was found that the school counselors demonstrated professional competencies consistent with the Academic Qualification Standards and Counselor Competencies stipulated in the Regulation of the Minister of National Education No. 27 of 2008. These competencies included the ability to understand and implement assessment practices for identifying students' needs and concerns, mastery of counseling theories and practices, the design and implementation of comprehensive counseling programs, evaluation of counseling processes and outcomes, commitment to professional ethics, and the application of research principles in guidance and counseling. The counselors at SMA Negeri 17 Medan also met the required academic qualification standards, holding Bachelor's degrees in Guidance and Counseling.

Prior to designing counseling programs, counselors conducted needs assessments using various instruments, including the Problem Checklist (Daftar Cek Masalah/DCM), sociometry, and the Problem Disclosure Instrument (Alat Ungkap Masalah/AUM), and appropriately utilized the

assessment results to inform service delivery. However, several challenges were identified in implementing counseling programs. Group counseling services, for example, were not conducted optimally because they often conflicted with students' instructional schedules, while many students participated in extracurricular activities after school. The findings further indicated that students generally held positive attitudes toward the school counselors, particularly because counselors employed approaches that were responsive to students' needs. Students appreciated counselors who used interactive, supportive, and solution-focused techniques, such as group discussions and individual counseling sessions. Nevertheless, some students reported concerns regarding confidentiality and trust, expressing reluctance to disclose personal issues due to fears that their information might not remain private.

Considering the background outlined above, this topic is regarded as both relevant and significant because it is directly associated with the important role of school counselors in improving service quality and supporting the achievement of educational goals. Students' attitudes toward counselors' professional competence warrant further investigation, as students' perceptions and responses may influence the effectiveness of guidance and counseling service delivery. Therefore, this study focuses on the relationship between students' attitudes and the professional competence of school counselors in order to develop an empirical understanding of counseling service implementation within formal educational settings.

Method

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive quantitative research design using a survey method to examine students' attitudes toward the professional competence of school counselors. A quantitative descriptive approach was selected because it enables researchers to systematically describe and quantify participants' perceptions and attitudes toward a particular phenomenon. The study was conducted during the second semester of the 2024/2025 academic year at SMA Negeri 17 Medan, Indonesia.

Participants and Sampling

The target population consisted of 861 students enrolled in Grades X, XI, and XII at SMA Negeri 17 Medan. A sample of 273 students was determined using Slovin's formula to ensure an adequate representation of the population. The participants were selected through proportionate stratified random sampling, allowing each grade level to be represented proportionally according to its population size. This sampling technique was employed to enhance the representativeness of the sample and minimize sampling bias.

Instrument and Data Collection

Data were collected over a two-month period using a structured questionnaire administered through Google Forms. The questionnaire was developed based on indicators of students' attitudes toward the professional competence of school counselors and served as the primary instrument for data collection. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Prior to data collection, the instrument underwent validity and reliability testing using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 25 to ensure its psychometric adequacy. The validated instrument was then distributed electronically to students from Grades X, XI, and XII who met the sampling criteria.

Data Analysis

The collected data were processed and analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques. Data analysis included the calculation of total scores, means, percentages, and standard deviations to provide a comprehensive description of students' attitudes toward the professional competence of school counselors. The findings were presented in the form of frequency distributions and statistical tables to facilitate interpretation.

Furthermore, the results were categorized using predetermined interval classifications to identify the level of students' attitudes toward counselors' professional competence. This approach enabled the researchers to obtain an objective and systematic understanding of students' perceptions regarding the professional competence of guidance and counseling teachers.

Result and Discussion

Results

Descriptive Results of Students' Attitudes Toward School Counselors' Professional Competence

Based on the analysis of questionnaire data collected from 262 students at SMA Negeri 17 Medan, the overall distribution of students' attitudes toward the professional competence of school counselors is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Students' Attitudes Toward School Counselors' Professional Competence

Attitude Category	Score Range	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Very Negative	255–262	38	14.5
Negative	263–272	83	31.7
Positive	273–280	97	37.0
Very Positive	281–289	44	16.8

Descriptive Results Based on Attitudinal Dimensions

Based on the questionnaire data, students' attitudes toward school counselors' professional competence were analyzed across five affective dimensions: receiving, responding, valuing, organization, and characterization.

Table 2. Distribution of Students' Attitudes on the Receiving Dimension

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Negative	29	11.1
Negative	51	19.5
Positive	167	63.7
Very Positive	15	5.7

Table 3. Distribution of Students' Attitudes on the Responding Dimension

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Negative	48	18.3
Negative	60	22.9
Positive	111	42.4
Very Positive	43	16.4

Table 4. Distribution of Students' Attitudes on the Valuing Dimension

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Negative	38	14.5
Negative	80	30.5
Positive	94	35.9
Very Positive	50	19.1

Table 5. Distribution of Students' Attitudes on the Organization Dimension

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Negative	41	15.6
Negative	90	34.4
Positive	84	32.1
Very Positive	47	17.9

Table 6. Distribution of Students' Attitudes on the Characterization Dimension

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Negative	42	16.0
Negative	77	29.4
Positive	104	39.7
Very Positive	39	14.9

Discussion

Overall Students' Attitudes Toward School Counselors' Professional Competence

The findings indicate that students' attitudes toward the professional competence of school counselors at SMA Negeri 17 Medan were generally positive, with a mean score of 285.36. The distribution revealed that 14.5% of students fell within the very negative category, 31.7% within the negative category, 37.0% within the positive category, and 16.8% within the very positive category. These findings suggest that most students perceived the professional competence of school counselors positively, although the difference between positive and negative perceptions remained relatively small.

According to Winkel and Hastuti (2023), the effectiveness of guidance and counseling services is strongly influenced by students' attitudes and levels of trust toward school counselors. Students who perceive counselors as competent are generally more open, cooperative, and willing to participate in counseling activities. Conversely, negative perceptions may reduce students' willingness to engage in counseling services, thereby limiting the effectiveness of such interventions. The relatively narrow difference between positive and negative responses suggests that positive perceptions have not yet become fully dominant among the student population. The findings further indicate that school counselors at SMA Negeri 17 Medan have demonstrated professional competence that contributes to the development of positive student attitudes toward counseling services. Nevertheless, improvements are still needed, particularly within the organizational dimension of attitudes, to help students integrate the values promoted through guidance and counseling services into their daily lives. These findings support the assertion of Nurul and Rini (2023), who reported that counselors' professional competence significantly influences students' attitudes toward guidance and counseling services.

Students' Attitudes Based on Individual Attitudinal Dimensions

Receiving Dimension

The receiving dimension represents the initial stage of the affective domain and reflects students' willingness to attend to and accept an attitudinal object (Krathwohl, Bloom, & Masia, 1964). The findings revealed that most students were classified within the positive category, indicating that they were receptive to and attentive toward the role and professional competence of school counselors. This finding suggests that counselors have been successful in fostering students' trust and acceptance through professional and empathetic service delivery. The result is consistent with Fitriyani (2021), who found that counselors' professional competence and empathy significantly influence students' acceptance of counseling services.

Responding Dimension

The responding dimension reflects students' active involvement with an attitudinal object through participation and observable responses (Krathwohl et al., 1964). The findings demonstrated that this dimension was categorized as positive, indicating that students were willing to participate in counseling activities, attend sessions, ask questions, and seek consultation when necessary. This suggests that counselors' professional competence effectively encourages active student engagement. The finding is consistent with Rahayu (2020), who reported that counselors' communication styles and empathy significantly influence students' positive responses to counseling services.

Valuing Dimension

The valuing dimension represents the stage at which students begin to appreciate and regard the role of school counselors as meaningful and beneficial (Krathwohl et al., 1964). The findings indicated that this dimension was categorized as positive, suggesting that students perceived counselors as professionally competent and viewed counseling services as valuable. Students appeared to internalize positive perceptions regarding counselors' professionalism. This finding supports previous studies by Usman (2024) and Siti Aisyah (2024), which reported that counselors' professionalism and empathy contribute significantly to students' positive evaluations of counseling services.

Organization Dimension

The organization dimension refers to the process of integrating values into an individual's personal value system (Krathwohl et al., 1964). The findings revealed that this dimension fell within the negative category, indicating that some students had not yet fully integrated perceptions of counselors' professionalism into their everyday attitudes and behaviors. Although students generally

accepted and valued the role of school counselors, the internalization of these values appeared to be incomplete. This finding is consistent with Fitriyani (2021), who suggested that limitations in interpersonal communication and inadequate understanding of counseling services may hinder the development and organization of positive student attitudes.

Characterization Dimension

Characterization represents the highest level of the affective domain, in which values become integrated into an individual's consistent patterns of behavior and attitudes (Krathwohl et al., 1964). The findings indicated that this dimension was categorized as positive, suggesting that some students had incorporated values associated with counselors' professionalism into their own behavioral frameworks, including discipline, responsibility, and respect for others. This result is consistent with the findings of Siti Aisyah (2024) and Sari and Nurhayati (2023), who reported that counselors' professional competence significantly contributes to the development of students' attitudes and character.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that students' attitudes toward the professional competence of school counselors at SMA Negeri 17 Medan were generally positive, suggesting that students hold favorable perceptions and evaluations of counselors' professionalism. The results demonstrate that school counselors have exhibited professional competencies that contribute to the development of positive student attitudes toward guidance and counseling services. However, improvements are still needed in the organizational dimension of attitudes to help students more effectively integrate the values and principles promoted through guidance and counseling services into their daily lives.

Furthermore, students' attitudes toward the professional competence of school counselors were examined across five affective dimensions: receiving, responding, valuing, organization, and characterization. The findings revealed that the receiving, responding, valuing, and characterization dimensions were categorized as positive, indicating students' acceptance, participation, appreciation, and internalization of counselors' professional competence. In contrast, the organization dimension was categorized as negative, suggesting that some students had not yet fully integrated positive perceptions of counselors' professionalism into their personal value systems and everyday behaviors. These findings highlight the need for continuous efforts to strengthen students' understanding of the role and value of guidance and counseling services in supporting their personal, social, academic, and career development.

The findings provide important implications for school counselors, emphasizing the need to strengthen students' internalization of guidance and counseling values through more engaging, student-centered, and developmentally appropriate counseling interventions. Enhancing counselors' professional competence and fostering stronger counselor–student relationships may further improve students' attitudes toward counseling services and increase the effectiveness of guidance and counseling programs in schools.

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